



# Prairie Update

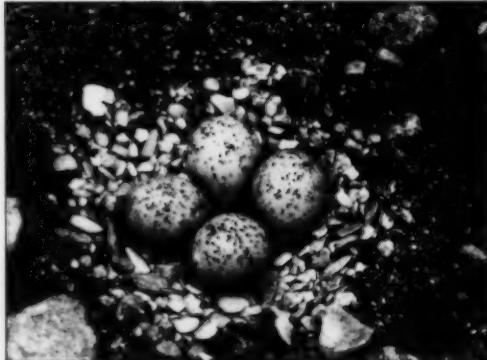
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## Piping Plover Census 2007

When you think of Lake Diefenbaker you probably think of the fishing or maybe your cottage. Maybe you think of the Gardiner Dam. Lake Diefenbaker plays many roles in Saskatchewan – it's important for irrigation, recreation, agriculture and power generation, and it's where nearly 40 percent of our population gets their drinking water.

However, Lake Diefenbaker isn't just important for the human residents of Saskatchewan; it's also important for the endangered shorebird, the Piping Plover. These birds have been listed as endangered since 1985, and the gravelly shores of Lake Diefenbaker are a favorite spot in Saskatchewan for breeding and raising their young. The entire population of the Piping Plover in 2006 was just over 6,000, and of that, 1,432 were in Saskatchewan, making the province home to about 23 percent of the world's population.

One reason the Piping Plovers are endangered is because they are very specific about their habitat. Lake Diefenbaker has just the right amount of sparse vegetation, gravel and



Four Piping Plover eggs in their pebbly nest on the beach.

pebbles, distributed over wide beaches. While this makes ideal breeding habitat, the nests at Lake Diefenbaker can be at risk of flooding. Numerous nests, prior to hatch, have to be moved each year in order to keep them safe. The number of nests at risk depends on three factors: when the Piping Plovers start nesting; the May 1<sup>st</sup> water levels; and the amount of water that arrives from Alberta during the course of the breeding season. In years where the water level is high, there are less birds, and during low water levels, there are more birds, so the management of

Lake Diefenbaker is an important factor for determining the Piping Plover population.

The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority conducts an annual population survey of the Piping Plover along the South Saskatchewan River, all the way from Saskatchewan Landing to the Gardiner Dam, including all of Lake Diefenbaker, an area of about 800 kilometers. During the last week of May and the first week of June every year, the Piping Plovers who have returned to Saskatchewan from their wintering homes in Texas and Mexico are counted. By this time of year, the Plovers have staked out their breeding territory on the beaches and have established their 'summer homes.'

Most of the birds which live at Lake Diefenbaker have been banded in past years, making it easier for researchers to track which birds have come back. Piping Plovers have strong site fidelity – they go back to the same place every year. In 2005, there were 254 Piping Plovers in the Lake Diefenbaker area, the highest population count recorded. In 2006 and 2007 there were 120 and 117 plovers recorded during the annual census, respectively.



Scanning for nests on Summit Beach, at Tom Ford's Coulee on Lake Diefenbaker. A total of 21 Piping Plovers were spotted in this five kilometer stretch of beach during the 2007 census. A total of 16 nests were found on the beach during this year's census.

# What's New . . .

*Take a look at some of the upcoming events and new projects and programs available from the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority and our partner agencies . . .*

## Government Releases Saskatchewan's Green Strategy

This April, the Provincial Government released Saskatchewan's Green Strategy, a framework for improved environmental management that recognizes the importance of the environment in maintaining a prosperous economy and a healthy society.

The Green Strategy builds on existing actions and focuses attention in areas of potential growth and change, with the purpose of expanding current environmental programs and stewardship practices. It contains over 100 actions to protect the environment and address climate change, and includes \$7.5 million in spending on various initiatives.

For more information on Saskatchewan's Green Strategy, visit [www.saskatchewan.ca/green](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/green).



## Saskatchewan Celebrates Native Prairie Appreciation Week

Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman and Environment Minister John Nilson jointly proclaimed June 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> Saskatchewan Native Prairie Appreciation Week 2007. This annual event provides an opportunity for



the Saskatchewan public, and especially ranchers, naturalists, hunters, educators and resource agency specialists, to celebrate the numerous benefits of native prairie.

A highlight of this year's Native Prairie Appreciation Week was the Society for Range Management's "Discover the Cypress Hills" workshop and tour, which was held June 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> based out of Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park. Hosted by the Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan, the event featured numerous speakers from a variety of agencies working in the land management field, as well as field tours and outdoor activities.

For more information on Saskatchewan's Native Prairie Appreciation Week, call the Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan at (306) 352-0472 or visit their website, [www.pcap-sk.org](http://www.pcap-sk.org).

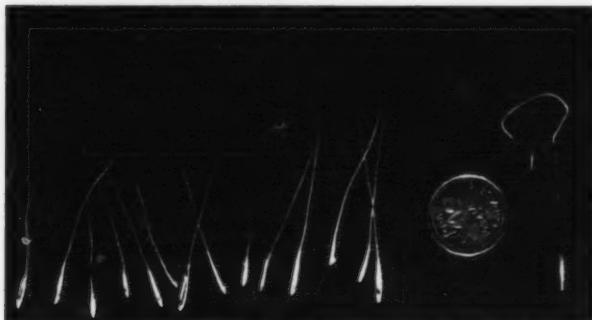


PHOTO COURTESY ANDY HAMMERMEISTER

Needle and thread grass seed, pictured here, is one of the many native plant materials that will be available through the listing service.

## Native Plant Listing Service Improved

Native plant material producers and buyers in the prairie region will soon have access to an exciting new sourcing and supply database. The Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan is currently changing its online listing service to allow its members to update their product availability and pricing instantly, at any time.

The new listing service will provide producers, suppliers and service providers with access to a password-protected online database. Rather than submitting their information to the Society to be added to the website, members will be able to update their information by themselves, as often as they require, and post information such as quantities available and prices.

The new listing database is being developed in partnership between Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan and the Alberta Native Plant Council. Funding for the service has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Greencover Canada Program. The listing service will be accessible at both [www.npss.sk.ca](http://www.npss.sk.ca) and [www.anpc.ab.ca](http://www.anpc.ab.ca).

## Toilet Retrofit Grant Now Available

**B**eginning this year, financial support has been made available for several new home retrofit options under the Saskatchewan EnerGuide for Houses grant program. One of the new eligible retrofits includes a \$100 grant for homeowners to replace their toilet with a new low-flush or dual-flush model. The Province of Saskatchewan, through the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, is contributing \$50 to this grant for each toilet that is replaced, which will be matched by the Federal Government.

Toilet retrofits are one of the best options for reducing municipal water use, which is the second biggest water-using sector in the province behind agriculture. Converting to a low-flush or dual-flush toilet can reduce the amount of water used for flushing by 60 to 75 percent, and reduce the total indoor water use in a given household by an impressive 30 percent.

For more information on the Saskatchewan EnerGuide for Housing grant program, please visit [www.saskenergy.com](http://www.saskenergy.com).

## 2007 Irrigation Field Day Coming Up

**T**he 2007 Irrigation Field Day, Tour and Trade Show is set to be held July 12<sup>th</sup> at the Canada-Saskatchewan Irrigation Diversification Centre in Outlook. This event combines a trade show and presentations from various organizations with three field tours addressing topics such as specialty crops, crop varieties for ethanol production, and irrigation systems and water management.

According to Saskatchewan's Water Conservation Plan, agriculture is the largest water-using sector in the province, with most of this use coming from irrigation. Irrigation is important to the sustainability of agriculture in Saskatchewan, providing mitigation for drought risks and support for livestock production. With the number of irrigated acres expected to increase in the future, it is important that we make efficient use of this resource.

Admission to the event is free, and lunch will be provided on site. For more information, call the Canada-Saskatchewan Irrigation Diversification Centre at (306) 867-5400.

Freshwater Withdrawals in Saskatchewan by Sector

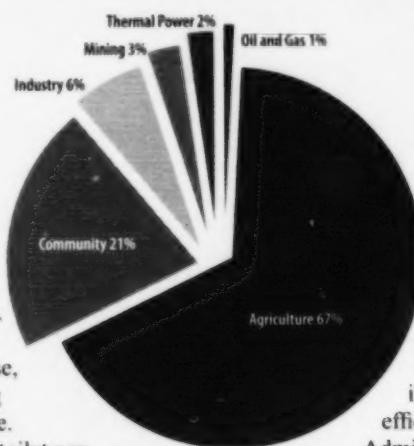


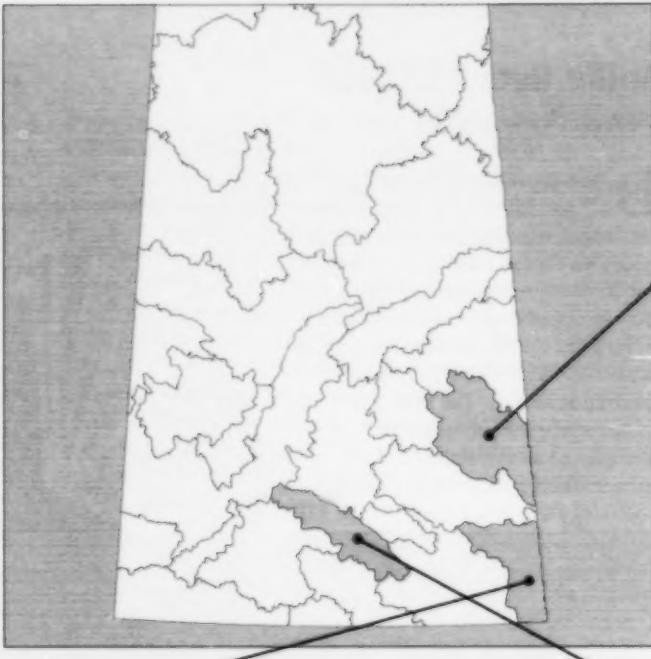
PHOTO COURTESY SASKATCHEWAN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

Using water efficient irrigation systems not only saves water, but can also reduce producer costs.

# Update on Source Water Pro

In 2006, Saskatchewan's first four Source Water Protection Plans were completed. These documents are action plans aimed at protecting and managing source waters in three of Saskatchewan's priority watersheds and the aquifers in and around Yorkton. They were developed over a period of more than two-and-a-half years by dedicated local residents serving on Watershed Advisory Committees, with support from technical experts from the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority and numerous other public and private agencies.

Following the completion of these four Source Water Protection Plans, local not-for-profit groups were established to lead the implementation of the numerous key actions they contain. As part of its ongoing support for these source water protection efforts, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority has entered into funding agreements with each of the groups to assist with the salary, office and travel expenses associated with hiring a local watershed manager to co-ordinate implementation of the plans. Here, each of these watershed managers has provided an update on their recent activities.



## LOWER SOURIS WATERSHED COMMITTEE

The Lower Souris Watershed Committee Inc. has undertaken many of the key actions identified in their Source Water Protection Plan, as well as several other projects that are helping the stewardship group protect the Lower Souris River Watershed!

BMP Technician Lyn Kuhn has been working closely with producers on implementing Beneficial Management Practices as part of the Agri-Environmental Group Plan. This has included farm visits, project design, producer workshops and field days. In addition to the Group Plan, the Watershed Committee is assisting with well decommissioning, farm yard runoff control and corral relocation. Additional funding has been made available for producers considering implementing these practices, and the Committee can be contacted for more information. The Committee has also been developing a Ground Water Source Water Protection Program that focuses on well head integrity and proper well decommissioning.

A lot of time has been spent recently on establishing a research project that will determine how Ecological Goods and Services policy tools could be used in a working landscape to achieve desired environmental endpoints.

The study will focus on the provision of wildlife habitat. Staff will be conducting on-farm interviews to determine local agricultural costs of production, and will also be conducting range and riparian area health assessments as part of this project. The Committee has also started on a fisheries habitat and migration survey within the watershed. This survey is a partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

In addition, in my role as Watershed Coordinator I have been contacting all municipal governments within the watershed regarding their participation in Source Water Protection Plan implementation, and have also begun developing a communication and education strategy to raise awareness about the Committee and watershed health to the general public.

**Sheldon Kyle**  
**Watershed Coordinator**  
**Lower Souris Watershed Committee Inc.**



# tection Plan Implementation

## ASSINIBOINE WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATION

The Assiniboine Watershed Stewardship Association Inc. is a newly-formed non-profit organization which has taken on the role of overseeing implementation of the Assiniboine River Watershed Source Water Protection Plan and the Yorkton Area Aquifers Source Water Protection Plan. I joined the Association this past May as its first Watershed Manager, and it's my job to coordinate the delivery of these two plans. And even though I haven't been on the job long, it's certainly been a busy start!

In early June we held a Grand Opening for our new office, which is located in Yorkton City Hall. This office space has been provided to us free of charge by the City of Yorkton. Mayor for the City of Yorkton, Chris Wyatt and Don Olson, the Chairperson of the steering committee for the Assiniboine Watershed Stewardship Association, were on hand to cut the ribbon to our new office. The event was well covered in the local media, and we're hoping that exposure will help

encourage local residents to stop by to visit and share their water questions and concerns with us.

The next few months are looking to be even busier, as we'll be working hard to introduce people in the area to the Association, as well as tackling the first few key actions in our Source Water Protection Plans. I'm looking forward to working with people throughout the watershed to accomplish our goal, and to helping make sure our water is safe.



Watershed Manager Aron Hershmiller, Yorkton Mayor Chris Wyatt and Chairperson Don Olson cut the ribbon to the Assiniboine Watershed Stewardship Association's new office.

*Aron Hershmiller  
Watershed Manager  
Assiniboine  
Watershed  
Stewardship  
Association Inc.*



## MOOSE JAW RIVER WATERSHED STEWARDS

On Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, we were honoured to join city officials, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority and city residents to officially launch Trout Unlimited Canada's Yellow Fish Road™ program in Moose Jaw. After formal presentations at the park, volunteers painted yellow fish symbols near storm drains in order to remind residents of the threat contaminated water

poses to both wildlife and humans.

The Moose Jaw River Watershed Annual General Meeting was held on June 25 at the Elks Lodge in Moose Jaw. The meeting provided an overview of our past activities and future source water protection initiatives.

For more information of upcoming events and projects, please feel free to contact me at (306) 691-3396, or visit our website at [www.mjriver.ca](http://www.mjriver.ca).



*Chad MacPherson, AAg  
Stewardship Coordinator  
Moose Jaw River Watershed Stewards Inc.*



# Livestock Watering System Aids Missouri Coteau Producer

Ensuring an abundant and reliable supply of good quality water is a critical part of a successful agricultural operation. Although there are often many direct sources available for livestock such as creeks, dugouts, sloughs and dams, producers should consider developing an off-site watering system on their farm or ranch.

Tom McKee, a producer in the Kildeer area, has implemented an innovative project on his operation for distributing water throughout his pastures – using refurbished hopper bottom bins.

McKee uses a gas powered pump to pump water from a dugout through a quarter-mile of pipeline to his 11.4 thousand gallon hopper bottom bin. From the bin, the water is gravity fed back through separate pipelines to troughs which service five different paddocks. The system fills the troughs at a rate of 70 gallons per minute and McKee has had no problems with the system since its establishment.

"The system has made my operation a little more hassle free," said McKee. "I only have to turn the pump on for approximately three hours every couple of days to fill the hopper."

McKee has since installed a second system with some additional unique features.

"I decided to place tombstone feeders around the

troughs of the second system, which prevents the cows from moving the troughs when they get low. I haven't experienced any difficulties with either system, and they have greatly improved my day-to-day operations during the grazing season," says McKee.

Stacey Gulka, Range Ecology Technician with the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, points out that by establishing a stock watering system, McKee is helping to protect stock water sources, while providing many economical benefits for his operation.

"Riparian areas perform many important ecological functions, including sediment and nutrient trapping, which in turn increase the stability and reliability of the water source," said Gulka.

"Producers can manage riparian areas and other water sources in a healthy and productive manner, which will ensure good water quality, land stability, and forage production, resulting in a better bottom-line in terms of beef production."



# Funding Deadline Nearing for Cost-Shared Beneficial Management Practices

The deadline to apply for funding through the Agri-Environmental Group Plans and Environmental Farm Plans is approaching. March 2008 is the official end of both programs, which are part of the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program.

Although next March is the program deadline, many of the Beneficial Management Practices that can be funded through either program will have to be installed or implemented during the summer and fall months.

The Agri-Environmental Group Plan program allows local landowners to work together, implementing beneficial management practices in two or three categories that directly target the environmental issue the group has selected. So far, one of the most important issues to producers has been protecting water.

Environmental Farm Plans allow each producer to work individually to come up with a specific plan that addresses environmental risks on their farm. Producers who complete an EFP are eligible for cost-shared incentives to adopt a wide range of Beneficial Management Practices.

The delivery of each group plan is coordinated by a local agency or committee, as well as a group plan advisor. The group plan advisor is on hand to help producers access funding and implement projects and to provide information and technical support throughout the process.

The Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program has been one source of critical funding for projects which protect watersheds and source water – an essential part of the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority's mandate.

## Additional Money Available for Implementing Beneficial Management Practices

If you're a producer thinking of relocating your livestock confinement facilities, improving farmyard runoff control or water well management, additional funding has been made available for you to make those changes to your operation.

The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority recently received funding through the Government of Saskatchewan's Green Strategy to further assist producers in implementing several practices that are being encouraged in the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program.

"Producers who have already applied to the Farm Stewardship Program are eligible to receive an additional 25% of the cost of implementing these three different beneficial management practices. The practices have a wider benefit to the population and the surrounding watershed than just one particular farm or individual, and we want to be able to assist with the costs of making those changes," says Tom Harrison, Director of Projects and Partnerships, Saskatchewan Watershed Authority.

Under the Farm Stewardship Program, producers with

an Environmental Farm Plan and/or Agri-Environmental Group Plan can receive a 50% cost-share, up to a maximum of:

- \$20,000 for farmyard runoff control,
- \$30,000 for relocating livestock facilities such as corrals, and
- \$6,000 for sealing and protecting water wells.

The additional Green Strategy funding through the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority covers 25% of the cost of undertaking these practices to a maximum amount of:

- \$500 for the runoff control,
- \$5,000 for relocating livestock facilities, and
- \$500 for water well practices.

All of these practices work to protect source water – rivers, lakes, streams, and ground water – by minimizing negative impacts.

For details on the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program, and Environmental Farm Plans, go to [www.saskpcab.com](http://www.saskpcab.com) or call 1-866-298-7222.

*Call your local representative for more information on this Green Strategy funding:*

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# Hello Voluntary Stewards!

Thank you for taking the time to read the Summer 2007 edition of the Prairie Update! As always, we hope you have enjoyed the articles included in this newsletter, and we welcome any comments you have. And of course, our sincere thanks go to those who agreed to share their stories with us in these pages.

We particularly hope you enjoyed our features on how Saskatchewan producers are making changes to their operations that not only make business sense, but also help safeguard the environment. Whether through programs like the Government of Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program or an Agri-Environmental Group Plan, these producers are making major contributions to the conservation and protection of our natural resources.

You can find more information on the Prairie Stewardship Program in back issues of this newsletter. These issues, as well as interactive maps featuring other stewardship project demonstration sites, can be viewed on our Web site at [www.swa.ca](http://www.swa.ca).

Angela Bethune  
Paul Chomos  
Ryan Lorge

## Share Your Ideas!

If you have comments or ideas about this newsletter, please contact:

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Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

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Wildlife Habitat Canada

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

## Coming Events

For more information, please contact the following staff members in the office nearest you:

<b>North Battleford</b>	Jeremy Brown	446-7460
<b>Regina</b>	Etienne Soulodre	787-0661
<b>Swift Current</b>	Krista Connick Bob Springer	778-8280 778-8301
<b>Yorkton</b>	Jason Puckett Lyndon Hicks	786-5845 786-1496